

PRESS RELEASE

CHILDSAFE & WOOLWORTHS PUT THE SPOTLIGHT ON CHILD SAFETY DURING CHILD SAFETY MONTH

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Every year in South Africa, over 570* children are killed in pedestrian accidents because someone didn't see them. Another 250* die because someone didn't buckle them in. Over 325* children drown because an adult turned their back. Nearly 230* die of burns because an adult wasn't watching over them. Overall, a staggering number of children – some 6500 -- die in South Africa due to injury. Most of these deaths, and the thousands of accidents that leave children scarred or disabled, are preventable.

South Africa isn't alone: according to the World Health Organisation, accidental injury is responsible for almost 90 percent of the one million deaths of children under 18 years of age that occur annually throughout the world.

"It's a bit of a harsh statement, but most accidents to children under the age of eight are basically the responsibility of adults," says Prof. Sebastian van As, President of Childsafe and Head of the Trauma Unit at Cape Town's Red Cross Children's Hospital. "You can't blame the child, because he or she is too immature to understand the dangers. If you take a walk through the wards of Red Cross Children's Hospital, you'll find that more than half of all patients are here through accidents – caused mostly through carelessness and ignorance."

In order to try and break the pattern, Woolworths has joined forces with Childsafe and is taking advantage of Child Safety Month in August to launch a campaign aimed at raising awareness of the need for parents and other adults to be more alert to danger and more conscientious about taking steps to prevent accidents. The theme for the campaign, which is part of their Corporate Social Investment programme to address and prevent child vulnerability, is simple: "You're bigger. Be the adult."

Younger children – particularly those under the age of six – are at most risk of accidental

injuries. For example, a toddler who is not in a car seat has a five times greater chance of dying in a car accident than one who is properly restrained. In South Africa, nearly 90 percent of children being transported are not restrained. It's also important to remember that common objects like coins, pins and buttons are hazardous for children under three, who will generally put anything in their mouths.

The campaign creates awareness and asks adults to pledge to be more aware of the safety of the children in their care and to implement some simple tips to help keep them safe. Some of the tips:

1. Buckle up all passengers for every journey and use car seats or booster seats for children up to the age of five.
2. Children under 6 should always be accompanied by an older child (over eight) or adult, especially when walking on busy roads.
3. Teach older children (over eight) to walk on the side of the road facing traffic.
4. Make sure your children are wearing light-coloured clothing and reflective strips if they often walk on streets in bad light.
5. Never let a child stand in the car.
6. Keep kettle cords out of reach, especially of toddlers, to prevent hot water burns.
7. Run cold water into the bath before hot water.
8. Always keep a close eye on children while bathing.
9. Teach children to swim as early as possible.
10. Always watch children when they are swimming.

Look for the Childsafe and Woolworths campaign, read the tips and make the pledge on www.myschool.co.za/childsafes – because no one wants to lose or injure a child through an easily preventable accident.

** (Source: Medical Research Council 2009: National Mortality Information Surveillance System 2008)*

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